

## Breaking Free

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Summary: Snoggletog takes a dramatic turn as a certain Night Fury is still missing. Will Stoic be able to break free, and be the father he longs to be? Will Hiccup be able to break free and show his father the real Hiccup?

## Breaking Free

**\*\*Breaking Free\*\***

Snoggletog fever had caught on quickly, as Stoic watched his tribe move towards the Great Hall. Everyone was smiling so brightly because their dragons were finally home. Even the dragons were excited as they flapped their wings excitedly. Their young-lings eyed them curiously before doing the same. Chuckling to himself, Stoic in-hailed deeply as his chest swelled with pride. Hiccup had done a wonderful thing by bringing the dragons home. Hiccup had saved Snoggletog.

As the crowd of excited Vikings made their inside, Stoic sauntered toward the entrance of the Great Hall. Reaching the first step, Stoic turned and surveyed the town square. His eyes stopped as his gaze fell upon the small frame of Hiccup. Stoic watched as Hiccup stood staring up at the evening sky. His eyes widened as Hiccup sniffed loudly.

"\_Is...Hiccup...crying...?" \_Stoic thought to himself.

Slowly, Stoic could feel his heart beginning to break as he saw Hiccup's shoulders begin shudder.

Unbeknownst to Stoic, Hiccup fought the urge to burst into tears with all his might. The more he fought that urge, the more he trembled. He could feel his whole body shaking as he stared at the sky, willing his beloved dragon to return.

"Hiccup?" Stoic called, walking towards his son.

Gasping out loud, Hiccup cleared his throat loudly. His shoulders immediately stiffened at the sound of his fathers voice. Panic set in as tears began to sting his eyes. Reaching up, Hiccup used his sleeve to dry his eyes. He then wiped his nose on his other sleeve.

Reaching Hiccup, Stoic placed a hand on his son's shoulder.

"Are you ok...son?" Stoic asked quietly.

Hiccup tensed as he felt his father's hand on his shoulder. As his father spoke he heard the concern in his voice, causing his eyes to sting even more. At that very moment Hiccup knew what he wanted. He also knew he couldn't have it. At moments like these, Hiccup wished he could fall into his father's arms and just cry. But it seemed that everything he did only embarrassed his father, so Hiccup refrained.

Wiping his eyes again, Hiccup turned and met his father's gaze. Averting his gaze, he nodded slowly.

Stoic's heart broke even further as he saw the pain in his sons eyes. He winced, as Hiccup gulped out loud.

"You sure...you're-"

"I'm...I'm ok...Dad.." Hiccup interrupted, nodding.

As if to validate his last statement, Hiccup broke free from his father's hold and wobbled towards the doors of the Great Hall.

Stoic stood anchored to his spot. The thoughts in his head seemed to weigh him down. Had he seen what really happened, or just what he \_wanted \_to see? Perhaps Hiccup was exhausted from the days journey. Perhaps Hiccup was just watching the sun set? A sudden thought caught Stoic off guard. He gasped out loud as Toothless came to mind. It was only that very morning that Hiccup had confided in him that he was worried about Toothless. Perhaps that's what was eating away at him. His heart began to ache as he remembered how Hiccup's shoulder's sank as he'd recounted knowing what it was like to miss someone during the holidays. Looking up, Stoic saw that Hiccup had already made his way inside. Bounding forward, Stoic made his way inside the Great Hall.

Stoic made his way to the usual table he sat at. Immediately, he was pulled into a conversation with some of the other villagers about the recent events of this years Snoggletog. Their voices began to drown out, as Stoic caught sight of Hiccup. Stoic watched as Hiccup moved through out the great hall. He could see Hiccup's eyes were red, and his cheeks had tear streaks on them.

With every turn, Hiccup could \_not \_escape running into a viking with their dragon next to them. He could feel his chest tighten as he saw the teens over at their table, each with their dragon at their side. His eyes then fell to Astrid who sat with her back to Hiccup. As she ate her food, Stormfly nudged her affectionately. Turning, she wrapped her arms around her dragon and sighed contentedly. Stormfly's young-lings all gathered around Astrid and coo'd loudly. Astrid

brought her arm around and gathered the young-ling's close to her. As Hiccup watched the exchange he felt his throat burn, as more tears made their way down his cheeks.

Stoic watched as Hiccup wiped his eyes with his sleeve. He felt \_his \_chest tighten, as he saw Hiccup struggle to stifle the tears. Hiccup put his hand to his chest, and slowly began to back away. Looking up Hiccup saw his father watching him. Their gaze locked as the two stared each other in the eye. Hiccup's shoulder's shook as he slowly shook his head.

"\_I'm...sorry...dad..." \_Hiccup mouthed.

Stoic felt a sheen of tears form, as he saw Hiccup lower his head. It was obvious that he could not hold back the tears. A sudden urge to scoop Hiccup into his arms, brought him to his feet. Excusing himself from the conversation, he turned only to find that Hiccup was gone.

"\_Oh...son..." \_Stoic pined to himself.

Looking down the great hall, he spotted Hiccup. He watched as Hiccup made his way towards the large doors at the entrance.

"...\_Why did...I do...that...? He doesn't need to have everyone see his wimp of a son having an emotional break down..." \_ Hiccup thought aloud, as he wobbled onward.

A sudden voice followed by booming footsteps made Hiccup's heart beat even faster.

"HICCUP!" Stoic yelled.

"\_Oh...great...now he's..mad at me!" \_Hiccup thought aloud.

Hiccup flinched as his leg screamed in protest as he moved towards the doors. Grabbing his leg he willed himself to move even faster.

"Hiccup STOP!" Stoic yelled, scant of breath.

It seemed the closer he got to Hiccup, the faster Hiccup moved. It pang'd Stoic to see Hiccup push \_away \_from him so adamantly.

More tears made their way down his cheek as Hiccup reached forward and pulled the doors open, and slipped through. Looking to the walls of the stair case he hobbled over and placed his hand on it, and began his decent. With every step, the weight that had begun to push on his chest grew heavier. It was near the fourth step that he heard his father burst through the doorway.

"Hiccup!" Stoic bellowed.

Hiccup hobbled faster as he heard his father's footsteps begin descending down the stairs.

"Son...\_please..." \_

Nearing Hiccup Stoic reached out, clasping a hand on Hiccup's shoulder.

"..Nuh...NO!" Hiccup whimpered, struggling from under his father's grasp.

Stoic brought his other hand around and sat down, pulling Hiccup down on the step next to him. He tightened his hold as Hiccup continued to struggle to free himself.

"Hiccup...just...\_stop.." \_Stoic said.

"...it's...\_ok...son.." \_

Stoic gasped as he felt Hiccup cease to struggle. Looking to his son he saw Hiccup pull his lips in. Hiccup's face began to contort as the sadness engulfed him.

With all his might, Hiccup fought to rein in the tears. He sighed as his quivering chin gave way to a blatant sob. His shoulder's shook as he buried his head in his hands. Hiccup gasped for air as he cried ardently.

"Son...\_what it it!" \_Stoic asked, his voice breaking.

Hiccup moaned in response.

"...Tuh...Tuh...Tooth..." was all Hiccup could manage.

"You...really...\_really...\_miss him \_don't you..?" \_Stoic asked.

Hiccup wailed out loud as he felt the pressure on his chest increase. Bringing his hands to his chest he did not try to stop the tears from falling.

Stoic stood, pulling Hiccup up with him. Keeping a firm grip on Hiccup's shoulders Stoic led his son down the stairs. Once on level ground Hiccup continued to wail as the two began to walk in a casual circle.

As he felt his father's grasp tighten, Hiccup stopped suddenly.

"Hiccup?" Stoic asked, looking down to his son.

Suddenly, Hiccup turned and wrapped his arms around Stoic. Breathing loudly, he summoned all his strength as he fought to hold on. Stoic gasped as Hiccup's arms trembled as they clasped to his waist. Stoic fell to his knee's causing Hiccup to release his grasp. Both hands fell to his sides, as Hiccup gulped out loud and met his father's gaze.

Reaching forward, Stoic grabbed Hiccup by the shoulders and pulled him close. Wrapping his arms around his son he held tightly, in an attempt to smother the sadness away. Hiccup wrapped his arms around his father and held tightly to him.

"Oh...\_Hiccup.." \_Stoic uttered, as Hiccup began to tremble.

"...\_It hurts..." \_Hiccup stuttered.

Burying his head in the crook of Stoic's shoulder, Hiccup continued to lament fervently.

"I know...\_I know..." \_Stoic soothed, holding tighter to his son.

Tightening his grip, Stoic's mind began to race frantically.

Ever since the battle against the Green Death, Stoic had put forth more of an effort to really \_listen \_to what Hiccup had to say. It seemed that Hiccup, always had a harder time confiding in his father and showing his feelings. At times a pounding head ache was all Stoic got as he strained to read \_any \_tell tale sign of emotion that would flash over Hiccup's face. Guilt always seemed to seep to Stoic's fore-mind as he realized that \_he \_had been the \_true cause \_of Hiccup's wariness towards affection of any kind.

"Oh...Gods..." Hiccup pined, scant of breath.

Breathing loudly, Hiccup fought to catch his breath. Clambering, Hiccup tightened his grip.

Stoic tightened his embrace in response.

"\_...Oh son..." \_

Time stood still as father held son.

Stoic felt Hiccup relax as sobbing lessened. A loud growl permeated forth from Hiccup's stomach, alerting Stoic to Hiccup's need for nourishment.

"You..ah...hungry there?" Stoic asked.

"Whah?" Hiccup answered, looking up.

Parting their embrace, Stoic stood and looked down at Hiccup.

"Come on." Stoic ordered.

Reaching down, Stoic pulled Hiccup to a stand. Gingerly he pushed Hiccup towards the steps.

Hiccup froze, as he felt his father's hand push him towards the Great Hall.

"..\_...I don't...think...I can..." \_Hiccup uttered, quietly.

"Hiccup...You \_have \_to eat \_something..." Stoic replied.

"I can't...go back...\_in there..." Hiccup said, his voice wavering.

"Ever...Every time..I see..a dragon...I suh...see Too...Tooth..."

Hiccup's voice trailed off, as he looked away.

Stoic could see Hiccup fought to hold the tears at bay, but his quivering chin made it all for naught. Taking Hiccup's shoulder's, Stoic turned him around.

"You...go on to the house..." Stoic said.

"I'll bring you a dish-"

"I'm...\_not...hungry..." \_Hiccup interrupted.

Sighing dolefully, Hiccup looked down at his feet.

"Hiccup...\_please..." Stoic uttered, his voice breaking.

Hiccup's head snapped up as he heard his father's plea.

Sighing, Hiccup nodded. The very thought of food made him salivate. He really \_was \_hungry. Hiccup flinched as his stomach growled loudly, demanding attention. Turning, Hiccup began to trek towards the house. Suddenly he felt light headed. He breathed deeply, hoping that would ease the dizziness. He did \_not \_want to alarm his father. Looking over his shoulder, he saw his father watching him.

Stoic gasped as he met Hiccup's gaze. Something wasn't right. He watched Hiccup turn and make his way down the path towards their home. He saw Hiccup stumble slightly as he reached the first step that led to their front door.

\_"Is...it just me...or is Hiccup pale...well pale-er then usual...?" \_Stoic thought to himself.

Hiccup stopped, and placed his hands on his knees. He could not stop the spinning, and his vision was beginning to blur. Looking over towards the great hall, he saw his father \_still \_watching him. He stood and gave a lopsided smile, hoping that would ease his father's worry.

Stoic sighed as he saw the usual smile stretch across his son's face. Shaking his head, he turned towards the great hall. As he began his ascent up the stairs, he heard Hiccup in-hail loudly. Turning sharply, he dashed down the few stairs. Nearing the bottom, he could hear Hiccup struggling to breathe. Rounding the corner, he felt his stomach fall to his feet as he saw Hiccup collapse.

"Hiccup!" Stoic yelled.

Hastening his steps, Stoic made it over to Hiccup and scooped his son into his arms. Bringing his hand to Hiccup's mouth a sigh of relief escaped his lips, as Stoic felt Hiccup's breath against it. Rising he carried Hiccup up the steps, and opened the door to their home.

Making his way over to Hiccup's bed, Stoic knelt down and placed Hiccup on his bed. As he placed Hiccup's head on his pillow, Hiccup's left leg rolled off the side of the bed causing this prosthetic to bump against the bedside. Stoic gasped as Hiccup furrowed his brow, and moaned deeply. Looking down he saw Hiccup's leg buckle against the weight of the prosthetic. Reaching over he placed Hiccup's leg

back on the bed. Gingerly, he began to untie the prosthetic. The strands fell loose with out much of a struggle, and Stoic was able to pull the prosthetic free with minimal effort.

Rising, Stoic headed over to the cabinet in the far corner of the room. Opening it, he eyed the ointment that Gober had given him. Unbeknownst to Hiccup, Stoic \_had noticed \_every time he'd seen his son wince while walking, or rub his leg tenderly. Gober had told him to tell Hiccup to apply the ointment, and that it would help calm his nerves. Gober had also attempted to explain what a phantom pain was. As the thought about it, Stoic realized that Hiccup's leg seemed \_less \_irritated when he and Toothless would return from flying.

\_"Huh...Flying is actually beneficial for Hiccup's leg...?" \_Stoic thought to himself.

Guilt washed over Stoic as his thoughts continued.

\_"Beneficial in more ways then one..." \_Stoic stated, sighting out loud as thoughts of Hiccup's need to \_get away \_flooded his mind.

Garnering the ointment in hand, Stoic made his way back to Hiccup's side. Kneeling down he set the ointment on the floor. Bringing his hands forward, he gingerly tugged on Hiccup's pant leg. Hiccup's pale skin, only added to Stoic's concern as he eyed the deep amethyst colored veins that stemmed upward from the base of the stub. Rolling the fabric back gingerly, he gasped as the veins continued to spiral upwards. Acquiring the jar of ointment he opened it. Dolloping his hands in the jar, he reached forward and began to rub it into Hiccup's leg.

Hiccup in-hailed sharply causing his father stop suddenly.

A soft giggle emanated forth from Hiccup, causing his father to looking up from his task. Turning he looked upon his son. Hiccup still had his eyes closed, but an obvious \_smile \_had appeared at the corners of his mouth.

\_"...Toothless...sus...Stop it..." \_Hiccup mumbled sheepishly.

Stoic felt a small set of hands suddenly nudge at him. Looking down, Stoic saw Hiccup reaching down, trying to push him away. Hiccup's hands continued to push at Stoic's, as they felt around blindly. Resting with in Stoic's mighty palm, Hiccup's hands sopped suddenly. Stoic clasped \_both \_hands around Hiccup's and held tightly.

"Tooth-" Hiccup muttered quietly, opening his eyes slowly.

"Hiccup!" Stoic interrupted, looking to his son.

A worried pair of emerald eyes searched around frantically, as Hiccup looked around nervously. Hiccup's gaze finally rested on the hands that held his. All traces of the smile evaporated, as an all too familiar weight returned to his chest. He sighed dolefully as his father tightened his grip.

"...oh..." Hiccup uttered, averting his gaze.

Hiccup looked away, as the tears returned. Furrowing his brow Hiccup sought to keep the tears at bay. They fell anyway.

"I\_t's ok bud... \_" Stoic soothed.

Sitting up quickly, Hiccup jarred forward as a heart wrenching sob fell from his lips. Pulling free from Stoic's hold, Hiccup's hands made their way to his chest. In-hailing deeply, another piercing cry flew from his lips. Hiccup shuddered might-ally as his wailing reached a renewed ferocity.

"...\_Hiccup...?" \_Stoic asked, his voice laced with shock.

Wrapping his arms around his son, Stoic held onto Hiccup tightly. Hiccup trembled even more as Stoic tightened his embrace.

"Son!" Stoic asked, his voice booming

"Tuh...too...\_Toothless..." \_Hiccup blubbered.

"I know...I know.."

Hiccup shook his head fervently.

"Nuh...No dad...You \_don't...nuh...know..." \_Hiccup rasped.

"What then?" Stoic yelled.

Stoic felt Hiccup flinch as the words fell from his mouth.

"\_Hiccup?" \_Stoic asked, softly.

Clearing his throat, Stoic continued.

"\_I'm sorry...I didn't mean to yell.."\_"

\_ "Please...dad..." \_Hiccup uttered.

"Puh...please..."

"Oh son...\_What is it!\_" Stoic asked.

"Cuh...Can...yu...you...\_not call...me.." \_Hiccup stuttered, stopping suddenly.

Looking down, Stoic saw Hiccup's face was frozen as the battle over his emotions ensued.

"Go \_on \_son..." Stoic soothed.

"...\_Bud..." \_Hiccup uttered.

"Bud?" Stoic asked, furrowing his brow.

"That's...\_Too...Toothless's...nick...nickname..." \_Hiccup pined, as his lip began to quiver.



"\_Hiccup..." \_Stoic uttered, parting their embrace.

The motion caused Hiccup to look away. He \_did not \_want to meet his father's gaze.

"Son...? Look at me...\_please..." \_Stoic pleaded.

Stoic gasped as he saw Hiccup's eyes were swimming in tears as his son turned and met \_his \_gaze.

"Son...\_I'm..so sorry..." \_Stoic apologized.

Falling forward, Hiccup buried his face in his hands and rested his head against Stoic's chest. Jarring back, Stoic in-hailed sharply.

"Oh...\_Hiccup..." \_Stoic rasped.

"Out with it...\_It's ok..."\_

Hiccup burst into tears, as he heard his father's voice break. His shoulder's shook as visions of the first time he called Toothless by his nickname flashed across his mind.

"Shhhhhh..." Stoic soothed, rubbing Hiccup's back gingerly.

After a short while, Stoic felt Hiccup's shoulder's relax. He felt Hiccup take in a shuddering breath, and ex-hail deeply.

"Hiccup?" Stoic asked, looking down to his son.

Looking up, Hiccup gave a weak smile.

Gulping loudly Hiccup's eyes closed, as his hands made their way to his leg. He'd felt the phantom pangs before, but it seemed to worsen the longer he went with out flying.

Eying his son's expression, Stoic saw Hiccup close his eyes. Stoic gasped as he felt Hiccup tense his shoulder's. Looking down, he saw Hiccup rubbing his leg tenderly.

"Here" Stoic stated.

Clasping Hiccup's shoulder's, he scooted his son back. Hiccup's stiffed moan, reached his ears as he braced his son against the bed's back board.

Reaching down Stoic applied more ointment and turned, looking to Hiccup.

Peering through one opened eye, Hiccup peered at his father. He felt heat rush to his cheeks as saw his father with the ointment in hand. Clearing his throat he looked away sheepishly.

"\_It's OK son..." \_Stoic soothed.

Hiccup looked to his father, and then down to his leg.

Stoic watched Hiccup's trembling hands gingerly grasp his pant leg.

Gingerly, Hiccup rolled the fabric up. As his eyes fell upon the dark veins spiraling up his leg, he sighed dolefully. Lowering his head, he averted his gaze.

Stoic hesitated, and then reached forward. Upon contact, Hiccup's stub felt \_very warm. \_Stoic gulped nervously, causing Hiccup to turn his gaze sharply. He tried to hide his panic as he rubbed the ointment on.

"Whah...What \_is \_it Dad?" Hiccup asked nervously.

Looking up, Stoic met Hiccup's gaze. He noticed the deep shade of rouge that befell Hiccup's face. Stoic could see beads of sweat shimmering on Hiccup's face as Stoic reached up, and placed the back of his hand to Hiccup's forehead.

"Hiccup...You're \_burning up..." \_Stoic stammered.

Hiccup gulped out loud.

"\_I...I am!" \_Hiccup stuttered.

Nodding slowly, Stoic went back to applying the ointment cautiously. He could see the stub was very tender from the daily demands of supporting Hiccup's weight. As he administered the ointment, he could feel it cooling the ramped heat that emanated forth.

Hiccup tensed immediately as a sharp pain jolted up his leg and continued up his back, causing him to arch his back.

"Aaaah!" Hiccup hissed, gritting his teeth.

"What is it, son...?" Stoic asked, as panic laced his voice.

"My...\_foot...\_It...\_hurts...allot!" \_Hiccup replied, his jaw clenched.

Stoic wiped his hands on his tunic, and reached forward grasping Hiccup's boot in an attempt to pull it off. Hiccup reached forward suddenly placing his hand on Stoic's, grasping it tightly.

Breathing loudly, Hiccup stifled a moan as the pain intensified

"No...dad..." Hiccup uttered quietly.

"Hiccup let me he-" Stoic pleaded

"NO DAD!" Hiccup interrupted.

"It's..It's muh...muh..."

Hiccup's grip on his father's hand tightened.

"HICCUP!" Stoic questioned.

Leaning forward, Hiccup moved Stoic's hand from his right foot, and placed it to where his left foot used to be. As if on cue, another

wave of pain shot up Hiccup's leg causing him to fall back against the back board. Hiccup inhaled sharply as the pain took hold. Closing his mouth he shut his eyes as he willed the pain to cease.

"It's...not...\_that foot...\_dad..." \_Hiccup uttered, scant of breath.

Stoic heard a stifled moan permeate from Hiccup, as he looked to his son. Reaching up, he clasped Hiccup by the shoulders. Hiccup seemed to writhe as his thrashing hold evaporated.

"Oh Gods..." Stoic muttered, gulping out loud.

Stoic saw Hiccup's nostrils flaring as his breathing became spur-attic. Reaching down Stoic applied more ointment, and began to rub it in gently. As the ointment worked into Hiccup's skin, he glanced up at his son. Hiccup sat with his head back, eyes closed, and jaw taught. Both hands were at his sides, knuckles white from gripping each bedside.

Stoic gave Hiccup's stub a good final rub, and then rolled the fabric down over it. Rising, he placed the jar of ointment back in the cabinet. Making his way back to Hiccup's bedside, he spoke.

"Hiccup?"

"Yeah...dad?" Hiccup spoke, through clenched teeth.

"You think you'll be ok by yourself...?" Stoic asked.

Opening his eyes, Hiccup turned and looked to his father. Right now his father's presence was about the only thing that \_helped soothe \_his pain. Right now being alone was \_the last thing he wanted.\_

\_ "What!...Wuh...Why...?" \_Hiccup asked, timidly.

"I need to go n' get Spitelout..." Stoic answered.

"You're \_very \_sick son..."

"No Dad!...\_Please...Don't go!" Hiccup pleaded.

"I won't be gone \_long... Stoic stated.

"You lie down and rest...I'll be back in a while"

Stoic turned and began to make his way towards the door.

Hiccup scooted to the edge of the bed and stood. Immediately, he fell forward. A stifled moan emanated from his lips as he hit the floor.

At the sound of Hiccup's moan, Stoic turned sharply and bounded towards his son. Kneeling down he pulled Hiccup upright.

"Hiccup!" Stoic barked

"What...do you think you're \_doing!" \_

Hiccup looked away sheepishly.

"I..ah..forgot.." Hiccup admitted.

"Forgot?" Stoic insinuated, raising an eyebrow.

Hiccup laughed nervously.

"Forgot...I didn't have my prosthetic on..." Hiccup stated, his cheeks reddening.

"Come on." Stoic ordered, rising.

Reaching down, Stoic pulled Hiccup to a stand. He led his son back to his bed. Hiccup sat down obediently, and looked to his father.

"Don't worry Hiccup...I'll be back...\_soon.." \_Stoic soothed.

Placing his hand on Hiccup's shoulder Stoic gave him a playful punch, and turned to head to the door.

"Promise?" Hiccup asked, feebly.

Looking over his shoulder, Stoic nodded in response.

Hiccup watched his father slip out of the doorway. Sliding down, Hiccup lay his head on the pillow. He grimaced as he stretched out his leg, causing his \_other leg \_to scream in protest.

"\_You're ok Hiccup...He will be back before you know it...He'll be back..befo-" \_Hiccup thought to himself.

Hiccup began to feel sleep tugging at his eyelids as he sighed dolefully. Turning to his right side, Hiccup's eyes slid shut as he reassured himself that his father would be back \_soon\_.

Hiccup felt a warm nuzzle push at his face. He shoved it away. Another nudge came from the warm body that was trying to wake him. \_Suddenly, \_his mind awoke as the pieces fit together \_finally\_!

"TOOTHLESS!" Hiccup yelled, excitedly.

Opening his eyes, he glanced over to make sure his assumption was not mistaken.

A pair of emerald green eyes, pupils dilated, glared back at him from a wriggling black body.

Toothless shuddered, as the excitement grew. Hiccup was finally awake!

Hiccup jumped up onto the imaginary saddle that appeared on Toothless's back. He placed \_both feet \_into their stirrups. He watched as the house disappeared as the two took off!

"\_Hmmm...That's odd...I could of sworn\_" Hiccup thought aloud, as he wondered how he had two \_real feet \_suddenly.

The \_warm \_sun seemed to melt all Hiccup's trouble away as the duo gained more height. With every inch they climbed Hiccup could feel his shoulders growing lighter and lighter.

"HICCUP!"

Hearing his father's voice, Hiccup snapped his head left and right as panic set in.

"What the!" Hiccup wondered out loud.

"HICCUP!"

His father's voice still echoed in his ears as he awoke suddenly. His father was leaning over him with a concerned look on his face

"Where'd...\_Toothles..?" \_Hiccup stuttered.

"It was...a \_dream...\_Hiccup..." Stoic stated.

Hiccup frowned at his father's words. It felt \_so real...\_Hiccup had \_really thought \_Toothless was \_back\_!

Stoic strained, trying to read the look that befell his son's face.

>"Oh son..." Stoic stammered.<p>

Looking to his left, Stoic saw his uncle Spitelout standing next to Stoic. Hiccup eyed the satchel on Spitelouts shoulder. He could only imagine what was in there.

"Help 'em sit up Stoic" Spitelout ordered.

Hiccup propped himself on his elbows, as Stoic grasped his shoulders. Hiccup pushed himself upright, as Stoic pulled him up. Hiccup leaned against the back board and closed his eyes, as a shudder worked it's way up his back.

Setting his satchel down, Spitelout propped himself against the bed and placed a hand against Hiccup's forehead. Frowning, he turned to Stoic and nodded. Turning back, he gently rolled Hiccup's pant leg up. His eyes grew wide as he eyed the dark veins that extended Hiccup's leg.

Turning to Hiccup, he spoke.

"Hiccup?"

"Yuh...yeah?" Hiccup stuttered.

"...This...\_isn't good...\_Your leg is infected...And there's only one way to check n' see how bad..." Spitelout stated.

Hiccup gulped out loud.

"Yuh...You mean...Yuh have to..cu-"

"There \_has \_to be another way Spite!" Stoic protested.

"I will \_not \_let you \_cut into...his leg.."\_

"Stoic?" Spitelout answered, angrily.

"This is his \_only chance! \_I \_have to \_do this!"

"Isn't there an easier way!" Stoic pleaded, his voice wavering.

"DAD!" Hiccup bellowed loudly.

Both Stoic and Spitelout turned towards Hiccup.

"If he \_doesn't \_do this...one of \_two \_things \_will...happen!"\_

\_ "No! I won't let him Hiccup!" \_Stoic snapped.

"If he \_doesn't do this...\_He'll be forced to amputate... Or worse!" Hiccup yelled, his face turning a darker shade of red.

Stoic began to pace.

"What could be worse! Stoic yelled to Spitelout.

"Stoic...Hiccup...\_could..die..." \_Spitelout uttered.

Stoic froze, his gaze focused on his brother's features. Looking to Hiccup, he met his sons gaze. His eyes pleaded with his son. He didn't want this to be the \_only option \_for Hiccup!

Hiccup nodded slightly.

Looking to his brother, Stoic nodded.

Taking his cue, Spitelout dug in his bag for the materials he'd need. Looking up Spitelout saw a small bench next to the fire pit.

"Stoic...Pull that bench over here!" Spitelout ordered.

"Oooh and well need two empty buckets.."

"Buckets!" Stoic answered, his eyes widening.

"Just get 'em will ya!" Spitelout retorted.

Stoic found two buckets in a corner, and brought the bench over and set them down beside his brother. As he watched his brother spread the bandages and tools across the bench Stoic looked down and sighed dolefully.

"\_Dad...I'm...I'm scared..." Hiccup uttered, his voice trailing off.

Walking over to the other side of the bed, Stoic knelt down. Reaching over he clasped Hiccup's hands in his own. He hoped Hiccup could not

sense how much this was shaking him to his core.

"Dad?" Hiccup whispered.

"What?" Stoic answered quietly, leaning in.

"You're...hurting me..."

Looking down, he saw Hiccup's hands turning blue as he squeezed them tightly.

"Oh!'" Stoic answered, loosening his grip.

"Sorry..."

"Ok Stoic...You'll need to hold 'em down.." Spitelout stated.

Hiccup gulped out loud.

"What!" Stoic asked, his voice laced with panic.

"Sit behind 'em, and hold onto 'em!" Spitelout barked.

"Oh Gods..." Hiccup stuttered, as he scooted forward.

Stoic sat down behind Hiccup, and pulled Hiccup close. He wrapped his arms around Hiccup, as he saw Spitelout test his small blade. Hiccup began to whimper, as Spitelout set the blade down. He watched Spitelout reach into his bag and pull a small cloth out of the satchel. Reaching over he handed it to Stoic.

"Place it in his mouth." Spitelout ordered.

Reaching down, Stoic did as told. Hiccup groaned as the cloth was placed in his mouth, as his heart began to race wildly.

"Hiccup..?" Spitelout cautioned.

"This is gonna hurt...ALLOT"

Hiccup groaned loudly.

"Ok...here goes..."

Stoic felt Hiccup tense as Spitelout brought the blade down.

A muffled scream permeated from Hiccup's lips as Spitelout made the first cut. He grappled for something to hold onto, and clasped tightly to Stoic's arms. He began to writhe as the searing pain began to blur his vision. He closed his eyes as the pain lessened slightly.

Stoic saw Spitelout stop. He watched as his brother brought a cloth forward and dabbed the incision. Spitelout nodded softly.

Turning he reached down and grabbed a bucket. Meeting his brother's gaze, he handed the bucket to Stoic.

"What's...this...for?" Stoic asked.

"This next part is gonna hurt...\_Even worse...\_" Spitelout said, his voice laced with concern.

Stoic didn't understand.

"Stoic...He might vomit.."

Stoic placed the bucket in front of Hiccup.

Hiccup's whole body writhed as Spitelout pressed down \_hard.

—

"Easy...easy..." Spitelout muttered.

"Hold 'em still Stoic!"

"It's ok...Hiccup..." Stoic whispered into Hiccup's ears.

Stoic looked upon Hiccup, and gasped as the color drained from his son's face.

Bringing the bucket closer, he placed it in front of Hiccup.

Suddenly, Hiccup ripped the cloth out of his mouth.

"Oh GODS!" Hiccup cringed, lurching forward. He clasped his hands to the rim of the bucket, and held tightly.

Hiccup began to gag, as the heaves flooded his whole body.

Hiccup moaned as Spitelout continued to apply pressure.

"Muh...Make it...stop!" Hiccup whimpered.

Suddenly Hiccup gasped out loud.

"I gotta...I gotta..guh...Oh Gods...Oh Gods..Oh Gods...Oden...huh..help..muh" Hiccup pleaded.

"Hiccup...What is it son..?" Stoic asked

Hiccup began to panic as he felt pressure build from \_below\_. He pushed against Stoic's hold in an attempt to stand. Stoic held tighter to Hiccup as he felt Hiccup began to shake violently. Suddenly Hiccup lurched forward, expelling into the bucket. To his dismay, Hiccup felt the pressure from below recede \_abruptly\_. Hiccup began to breathe loudly, as the embarrassment set in. Suddenly Hiccup lurched forward, heaving might-ally. Hiccup expelled into the bucket so strenuously, he blacked out.

Suddenly, Hiccup fell back against Stoic's chest

"Oh Gods!' Stoic yelled.

"Here!" Spitelout said, throwing another rag to Stoic.

Leaning in, Stoic felt Hiccup's breath against his ears. Hiccup was out cold. Taking the cloth, he wiped the mess from Hiccup's chin.



"Ok, I'm done." Spitelout said, standing up. Turning, he reached down and took the bucket from in front of Hiccup. Setting it down beside him, He eyed Hiccup's face. Reaching forward, Spitelout put a hand to Hiccup's forehead.

"Fever is still there..." Spitelout stated.

Seeing some color in Hiccup's cheeks, Spitelout knew Hiccup would be ok. He continued to asses Hiccup from head to toe. His eyes stopped when they reached Hiccup's waist line.

"Oh...no..." Spitelout groaned.

"What!" Stoic bellowed, looking at Spitelout sharply.

Stoic saw Spitelout wrinkle his nose.

As Stoic followed his brothers gaze, it stopped at Hiccup's waste. His entire lower tunic was damp. Standing, Stoic lifted Hiccup slightly. Stoic gasped out loud as he saw Hiccup's backside was completely soiled. Gently, he set him back down.

"Oh...\_son..." \_Stoic uttered, his cheeks reddening.

"What do I do Spite...?" Stoic asked, nervously.

"He needs to be washed. We do not need him getting sick due to a lack of personal hygiene." Spitelout answered.

Stoic gulped out loud.

"Wash...him...?" Stoic stuttered nervously.

Spitelout nodded. Reaching forward he placed a hand on his brother's shoulder.

"I'll take care of the buckets, and I'll bring back some water."

Stoic nodded.

"You go n' get Hiccup some fresh clothes and bring down some fresh linens." Spitelout ordered.

Spitelout took the buckets outside to the well behind the house. Emptying out the sick from the one bucket he drew water with the other and cleaned it out. He then filled up both buckets and proceeded towards the house. Once inside the house, he placed a few logs on the dying fire. In a few short seconds the flames shot upward. The stairs creaked announcing his brother's return.

As he neared the last step, Stoic eyed Hiccup. He realized he was glad Hiccup was not conscious because he knew Hiccup would've been so embarrassed if he knew what was about to occur. Stoic set the clothes on the table near the fire pit as Spitelout brought over the water. He helped Spitelout pour the water in the cauldron.

"Oh what I wouldn't give to have Toothless here..." Stoic quipped, eying the slowly growing fire.

A moan cascaded over from Hiccup's bed.

Glancing over, Stoic saw a pair of green eyes staring at the ceiling.

"\_Perhaps I'm seeing things?" \_Stoic thought to himself.

Hiccup blinked.

"\_Oh no!..." \_Stoic thought to himself.

"\_He's awake...How do I explain to my son...That I have to wash him!"\_

\_ "Toothless?" \_Hiccup stammered, groggily.

Stoic bounded towards Hiccup, and knelt down at his bedside. As he looked upon Hiccup, he saw Hiccup's chin quiver slightly.

"Hiccup...?" Stoic asked.

"\_Does..he know?" \_Stoic thought aloud.

Reaching down, Stoic pulled Hiccup into a sitting position.

Hiccup began to whimper, as he felt soiled fabric against his skin. Running his hands through his hair, a sob broke free.

"Shhhh...It's ok son...\_You're safe..." \_Stoic soothed.

"\_Dad...I..uuugh..I'm..soil-" \_Hiccup whimpered.

"Son...We need to...\_wash you..." \_Stoic interrupted.

"WHAT!" Hiccup shrieked, his cheeks reddening.

"Hiccup...We can't have the infection getting worse due bad hygiene..." Spitelout chimed in, walking over to Hiccup's side.

Hiccup leaned forward, and cried into Stoic's shirt. His shoulders shook as his whole body seemed to feel flushed.

"Why...Oden...Why!" Hiccup bemoaned.

"Hiccup?...This is for your own...good..." Spitelout continued.

"Hiccup...It's all right son..." Stoic soothed.

"No it's NOT Dad!" Hiccup yelled, pulling away from Stoic's broad frame.

"I can...wash...\_myself!" \_Hiccup stated, his voice shaking.

Looking to Spitelout, he pleaded with his uncle to change his mind.

Spitelout shook his head.

"Hiccup...\_Let me..help...you..." \_Stoic pleaded.

"\_...Please son.." \_

Looking to his father, Hiccup saw that Stoic's cheeks were flush as well. Sighing Hiccup nodded, feeling too weak to fight anymore. He realized that his arms seemed to weigh a ton, and his neck suddenly felt too weak to hold his head up.

Stoic jarred back as he felt Hiccup's body go limp.

"Hiccup!" Stoic yelled, looking to his son.

"Dad..." Hiccup stammered.

" I can't feel my arms..."

Stoic shot a worried glance towards Spitelout.

"That's normal Hiccup...You lost allot of blood.." Spitelout stated, nodding to Stoic.

Spitelout then sat down behind Hiccup. He placed his hands on Hiccup's shoulders. Gently, he pulled Hiccup back and steadied him . As Hiccup sat upright, his head bobbed downward. He winced as he felt the muscles in his neck twinge slightly.

Hiccup moaned as his his neck muscles screamed in protest

"Hiccup?" Stoic asked.

Wrapping his arm around Hiccup, Spitelout positioned Hiccup's head against his shoulder. A sigh escaped from Hiccup's lips as he felt the tension in his neck lessen.

"Much...better..." Hiccup mumbled.

"Stoic?" Spitelout asked.

Stoic had his gaze fixed on the floor.

"STOIC!" Spitelout boomed.

Stoic's head shot up, as he met his brother's gaze.

Spitelout motioned towards the cauldron with his eyes.

"Oh..." Stoic replied, softly.

Rising, Stoic headed to the cauldron. Reaching over the brim he stuck his finger in the water. He grimaced and pulled his finger out quickly. Taking an empty bucket in hand he dipped it in the water, and carried it over to the bedside. He then stood and brought over a few cloths and sat at the foot of Hiccup's bed. Placing the cloths beside himself, Stoic scooted closer to Hiccup. As he looked to Hiccup, he saw Hiccup was staring him in the eye.

"It's time...\_son..." Stoic stated, chocking on the words.

Hiccup began to breathe loudly, as it dawned on him that two grown men were about to see and wash \_every nook\_ and cranny of his small frame. The first thought was quickly followed by a second. Out of the two men and as far as \_he knew\_, his father was the only one that'd had seen his nude form before. It was when he was a baby no doubt. Or one of the \_many many\_ times he was sick as a young lad. Somehow, that thought \_just barely\_ \_edged away his worry. But only just.

"Hiccup what is it, son?" Stoic asked tenderly.

"Spuh...Spite-" Hiccup stuttered.

"Would you like me to wait outside?" Spitelout interrupted.

Hiccup nodded fervently.

"Nuh...nothin' personal...Spite...I...I...jus..." Hiccup's stated, his voice trailing off.

Spitelout squeezed the boys shoulder's comfortingly.

"It's ok Hiccup...I understand completely." Spitelout encouraged.

Looking to Stoic, Spitelout nodded to him. He rose steadily, still holding Hiccup by the shoulder's. Turning, he lay Hiccup down, taking care to support Hiccup's head as he placed it on the pillow.

"Hiccup?" Spitelout asked.

Hiccup met his uncle's gaze.

"You're gonna \_hate me \_for this but..." Spitelout cautioned.

Turning to Stoic, Spitelout continued.

"Stoic...Make sure you do a \_through \_job brother."

Stoic coughed forcefully, as he felt his cheeks redden.

Hiccup groaned inwardly, as he saw the exchange between his father and Spitelout. The reddening of Stoic's cheeks gave away everything. Hiccup began to tremble as he realized the true meaning behind Spitelout's words.

" \_Forgo all modesty and make sure you wash \_\_\*\*every inch \*\*\_\_o' the boy!\_" Hiccup mocked inwardly.

Spitelout looked to Hiccup and then back to Stoic.

"Ok I'm leaving before Hiccup turns \_another \_shade of red." Spitelout quipped.

With that, Spitelout made his way to the front door. Quickly, he opened it and exited the house.

Stoic set his eyes on the task at hand. Looking to Hiccup, he saw that Hiccup was \_very \_flushed. He scooted towards Hiccup and clasped the edges of Hiccup's tunic.

Looking down, Hiccup began to panic as Stoic pulled his tunic up.

"It's ok son..." Stoic soothed.

Shifting, Stoic rose and knelt by Hiccup's side. He then continued to shimmy Hiccup's tunic upward, stopping at Hiccup's upper torso. He gently reached down and pulled Hiccup upward with one arm. Hiccup rested against his father's shoulder as, Stoic pulled the tunic over Hiccup's head and off his arms. Hiccup shuddered as a chill ran across his bare skin.

Hiccup began to tremble as the thought of what lie next in the line of undressing. His father was about to remove his leggings and his underclothes, and see the soiled mess that had transpired.

"Hiccup...You're shaking..." Stoic stammered.

Laying Hiccup down, he looked for a response. He watched Hiccup close his eyes, as his hands sluggishly made their way to his lap. Hiccup shook his head slightly.

"I know...But I have to Hiccup..." Stoic stated quietly.

"Please..." Hiccup pleaded.

"It's ok son..." Stoic soothed.

"You're \_safe...\_"

Stoic reached forward and brushed a tear that had made it's way down Hiccup's cheek. With all his might Hiccup tried to quell the foreboding anguish that threatened to over power him. Hiccup in-hailed as more tears followed the first.

"Oh Hiccup...\_What is it son?" \_Stoic asked, tenderly.

A single sob broke free, as Hiccup felt the anxiety began to burst forth. His shoulder's shook as he fought the onslaught of emotion.

"I don't want to do this, dad..." Hiccup cried, scant of breath.

"Hiccup...Sometimes life hand's us situations we'd rather not have to deal with..." Stoic answered.

"But all we can do is deal with as best as we know how..."

Hiccup cried even harder.

"Hiccup I can't just leave you there to sit in your mess..." Stoic stated.

Hiccup's small frame writhed as he began to weep out loud.

Stoic reached down, pulled Hiccup close. Wrapping his arms around his son, he held tightly as Hiccup wailed into the crook of his arm.

After a few moments, Hiccup quieted down as he fought to gain control of his emotions. He knew that the sooner they did this, the sooner it would be \_done\_!

Stoic parted their embrace. As he looked upon his son, he could see the obvious battle going on inside Hiccup's head.

"Come on..."Stoic encouraged.

He lay Hiccup down, making sure Hiccup's head rested comfortably against the pillow. Stoic then reached down and began to shimmy Hiccup's leggings back and forth, pulling them down.

Hiccup gulped out loud, as he felt his father began to remove his leggings. He gasped as he saw Stoic pull them off and tentatively place them on the floor. He groaned as Stoic began to pull his underclothes downward.

"\_Oh...Gods..." \_Hiccup whimpered.

Stoic paused and grabbed a cloth. He placed the cloth in Hiccup's hand.

Coughing awkwardly, Stoic spoke.

"You can..cover yourself with...this.."

Hiccup nodded, slowly bringing his hand up to his lap. He draped the cloth down, and held it there.

Stoic removed the article of clothing and placed it atop the pants. He rose and set the pile of clothing in a separate bucket. Upon returning to Hiccup's side, he saw Hiccup was trembling might-ally. He noticed that the air had gotten cooler, and Hiccup's teeth had begun to chatter. Panic set in as he knelt down, and rolled Hiccup over on his side. The mess was thankfully not as bad as Stoic had feared it to be. He reached down and placed a wash cloth into the now warm water.

Stoic began to gently, clean the mess from Hiccup's back side. He couldn't help but in-hail sharply every time he felt Hiccup flinch against his touch. He could feel Hiccup tremble even more as he followed his brother's instruction's to the tee and cleaned \_every nook and cranny. \_

Stoic grabbed a new cloth and began to wash Hiccup's legs. Hiccup in-hailed sharply as stoic washed the base of his stump.

"Sorry..." Stoic apologized.

"It's ok..." Hiccup stuttered.

Stoic finished washing Hiccup's leg's and rolled Hiccup over to his back. Tenderly, he washed Hiccup's arms and upper torso. Propping an

arm under Hiccup's neck, he pulled Hiccup up and let him rest against his shoulder. Donning a fresh cloth he washed Hiccup's back using soothing circles to help ease the tension of the situation.

Hiccup sniffed, loudly causing Stoic to pull him back. Stoic held Hiccup with one arm wrapped around his son's shoulder's. Multiple tears made their way downward as Stoic studied his son's sol-um face.

"...Hiccup...?" Stoic asked, quietly.

"I'm...so embarrassed...dad..." Hiccup answered, his voice wavering.

"We're almost done son..." Stoic soothed

Gingerly, Stoic reached up and began to wash Hiccup's face. He held the cloth at Hiccup's forehead for a moment to help alleviate Hiccup's fever. He then continued to wash the rest of Hiccup's face. Gently Stoic lay Hiccup back down, placing his head on the pillow.

Stoic stood, and walked over to the table and grabbed the pile of clothes. Turning, he made his way over to Hiccup's bedside and knelt down.

"Oh Gods..." Hiccup mumbled eying the bundle in his father's arms.

Somehow Hiccup knew he would have to forgo the cloth he'd been using to cover himself as his father began to dress him. The moment of embarrassment passed quickly, and Hiccup breathed a sigh of relief once his underclothes, and leggings were on. Stoic pulled Hiccup up into a sitting position, and pulled the tunic over his son's head. Hiccup attempted to lift his right arm to thread it though the sleeve, only to have it fall uselessly to his side. Hiccup's lip began to quiver as he sighed heavily.

"Oh son...It's ok..." Stoic soothed, taking Hiccup's elbow in hand.

Stoic then lifted it threading it through the sleeve, and then did the same with Hiccup's other arm. Reaching over, he picked Hiccup up and carried him to one of the near by pillars, next to the fire pit. Hiccup met his gaze with a curious eye brow raised.

"I..uh..I need to change your bedding.." Stoic said hurriedly.

Hiccup lowered his head, sniffing loudly.

"Hiccup...It's ok son..." Stoic soothed.

Hiccup's shoulder's shook as he cried silently. Stoic reached forward and tilted Hiccup's chin upward. Hiccup's eyes that were now swimming with tears, met Stoic's gaze.

"We're gonna get through his son..." Stoic stated.

"\_Together"\_

Hiccup nodded, sniffing again. Hiccup groaned frustratedly as he realized he had not even the strength to bring his arm up to dry his tears or wipe his nose. Understanding his son's frustration, Stoic grabbed Hiccup's arm and held it up against his face. Hiccup rubbed his nose on it, and Stoic used Hiccup's sleeve to dab his eyes.

"Thanks dad.." Hiccup replied quietly.

Stoic nodded and rose, heading over to Hiccup's bed. Hiccup watched as Stoic bundled up Hiccup's clothes and bedding and carried them over to the designated \_wash corner \_of the house. Stoic then grabbed a cloth and dipped it in the now cold water. He scrubbed the wooden frame of Hiccup's bed might-ally.

A sudden hiss from Hiccup snapped Stoic's attention over to where his son sat. Hiccup had his eyes closed tightly, while he rested his head against the pillar. His knuckles were white from clenching his fists tightly. Stoic rose and bounded towards his son.

"Hiccup!" Stoic asked frantically.

"...Mmh...My...foot..." Hiccup managed to get out.

Hiccup began to breathe loudly, as the pain continued to escalate.

"What's wrong with your \_foot \_Hiccup?" Stoic asked.

Stoic reached forward and began to inspect Hiccup's right foot. As he moved the foot from side to side, a shaking hand reached forward and rested on his hands.

"It's not...\_that..foot...dad.." \_Hiccup said under his breath.

Gingerly Stoic lifted his hands and placed them next to Hiccup's right foot, right where his \_left foot \_used to reside.

"Phantom pains?" Stoic asked.

A moan escaped from Hiccup as he nodded fervently.

"Feels like an anvil's been dropped on it!" Hiccup quipped.

Stoic gulped out loud causing Hiccup's eyes to snap open suddenly. As he looked upon his father he saw that Stoic's gaze was completely focused on his stump. Suddenly, he saw Stoic's eyes began glisten as tears welled in them.

"\_Is...he...crying?\_" Hiccup thought aloud.

Hiccup gasped as a single tear fell down Stoic's cheek.

"Oh...\_Dad...It's ok..\_" Hiccup soothed.

Stoic's shoulder's began to shake as he heard Hiccup's voice. He felt



so \_guilty \_for \_everything. \_For not being the father Hiccup deserved, for not listening when he should have, for pushing Hiccup towards being something \_he was not\_.

As the mental list of his short failing's grew in mind, Stoic felt the guilt tightening it's grip. Stoic plunkered down, and buried his head in his hands, as a wave of silent cries permeated forth. With every silent sob, he felt more and more that he was indeed the \_worst father Berk had ever seen\_!

Hiccup jarred back startled, as he saw something he \_never thought\_ he'd see \_ever. \_Here was one of the toughest warriors ever known to Berk, reduced to tears by an invalid son that seemed to have only one destiny. To fail in every area of life. As the endless list of failure"s ran over and over in \_his\_ mind, the pressure in his missing limb began to increase. It seemed that his leg was sensitive to his current emotional state, as it hurt \_more \_when Toothless was not around. But suddenly Hiccup realized that it wasn't just Toothless that seemed to placate the pain in his limb. He noted that all though his leg continued to throb relentlessly, it seemed bearable with his father in the same room.

"Dad?" Hiccup asked, tenderly.

Hiccup reached out, and placed a hand on top of Stoic's.

Stoic didn't budge as he felt Hiccup's small hand on his. If anything, the tender touch brought forth more tears, and a renewed ferocity of sadness. The guilt was becoming unbearable.

Placing his other hand atop the other, Hiccup pulled himself up. Wobbling slightly, Hiccup righted himself and turned, putting his back to his father. Slowly he began to hop his way over to the cabinet in the kitchen area. The ointment had helped placate his phantom pain before, perhaps it would do the same again.

A odd shuffling sound filled Stoic's ears as he took in a shuddering breath. Exhaling forcefully, he dropped his hands and looked up. His eyes immediately shot from the empty spot where Hiccup had rested, to where Hiccup now leaned against the counter. He watched as Hiccup rubbed his stump as he turned and opened the cabinet. He saw Hiccup stand on his tip toe, and grab the jar of ointment. As Hiccup held the jar in one hand, he wobbled as he swung the cabinet door closed. Suddenly he lost his balance and tumbled to the floor.

"Hiccup!" Stoic bellowed.

Stoic cringed as he saw Hiccup hit the floor. Hiccup had managed to shift his weight causing him to fall backwards. All though he spared his stub from any pain, he reached backwards and rubbed his backside gingerly.

"Eeeech...\_That...hurt..." \_Hiccup quipped.

Hiccup placed his hand on the counter beside him. His arm bucked as he sought to pull himself up.

Stoic rose and made his way over to his son. Reaching down, he placed his hand under Hiccup's opposite arm. He held his grip as Hiccup braced against it, and hobbled to a wobbling stand.

"Thanks Dad..." Hiccup said.

Stoic wrapped his arm around Hiccup, and gave him support as he began to sway unsteadily. Together the two made their way to the pillar. Hiccup gingerly sat on the floor, leaning against the pillar.

Kneeling down in front of Hiccup, Stoic took the jar of ointment from Hiccup. As he began to loosen the lid, a sigh reached his ears. Looking up, he saw a straight line form on Hiccup's face.

Hiccup drew his lips in as he felt a frown tug at the corners of his mouth. The pressure that had momentarily recede, had returned with a vengeance. He felt his back stiffen as a sharp spasm worked it's way up his leg. He tried with all his might to hold in the pain that now seemed to engulf his body entirely.

"Hiccup...?" Stoic asked, placing his hand on Hiccup's shoulder.

"Gods...I can't..." Hiccup stuttered, his voice breaking.

"Yuh...You can't what...son?" Stoic asked, his eyes focusing on the tension in Hiccup's face.

"I can't...\_do this\_!" Hiccup whimpered.

Hiccup began to tremble as his resolve began to fade. Panic set in as Hiccup reached forward and began to pull the fabric up, uncovering his stub.

"Please Dad..." Hiccup uttered, his voice shaking.

"Hurry..."

Stoic dolloped the ointment in hand, and began to apply it to the base of Hiccup's stub. Hiccup hissed loudly as another spasm worked it's way up his leg.

"Ooosh..." Hiccup grimaced.

Hiccup closed his eyes tightly, and began to breathe loudly as he sought to gain control of the pain.

Stoic froze, not wanting to cause his son more pain.

"NO!" Hiccup yelled.

"It's ok...Dad..." Hiccup encouraged.

Blindly, Hiccup's hands worked their way towards where Stoic's hands now rested. Placing them atop his father's hands, he opened his eyes and sought his father's gaze. Meeting his father's eye he gave a meager nod, followed by a lopsided smile.

Stoic gave his son a questioning look. He felt a sudden burst of love towards his son as he saw the affection Hiccup fought to convey, in putting on a brave face.

"You're sure...I...I feel like I'm \_really hurting you Hiccup\_!" Stoic stated, his voice wavering slightly.

"It's ok Dad..." Hiccup stated, nodding again.

Stoic felt a smile tug at the corners of his mouth, as he felt his worry ease slightly.

A sudden knock at the door caused Stoic and Hiccup to look to the front door. Stoic looked to Hiccup. All thought it was most likely Spitelout, Stoic wanted to make sure Hiccup was ready for \_anyone \_to enter at all. A slight nod from Hiccup met his inquiry. Clearing his throat, Stoic spoke.

"Come in?"

The door opened slightly, and a familiar head popped through the gap.

"Everything going ok?" Spitelout asked, looking towards the two by the pillar.

Slipping through the door, Spitelout made his way towards Hiccup and Stoic. A nod from Stoic answered his question silently. Kneeling down next to his brother, Spitelout began to asses Hiccup.

Hiccup had closed his eyes again, as the momentarily distraction of Spitelout's return began to ware off. Placing his hand on his stub, he began to rub it gingerly.

"..Dad?" Hiccup asked, through clenched teeth.

"Oh" Stoic answered, resuming the treatment.

"Ah..." Spitelout uttered.

"Leg hurting you?"

Hiccup glared at his uncle through one eye. A moan escaped his lips as he nodded fervently.

"Gober...gave...muh...me the...ointment...to help...calm muh...nerves..." Hiccup stuttered, wincing even harder.

"Stoic how 'bout I finish this, while you finish changing Hiccup's bedding." Spitelout suggested.

Nodding Stoic rose, handing the jar of ointment to Spitelout. He headed over to Hiccup's bed and resumed scrubbing the frame. A few minutes later, Spitelout finished applying the ointment and rolled Hiccup's pant leg back down.

"Thanks." Hiccup muttered, his eyes closed tightly.

Giving Hiccup a slight pat on the shoulder, Spitelout turned to Stoic.

"How it going brother?" Spitelout asked.

"We need to get this one to bed..."

Stoic who was placing the pillow on a freshly scrubbed newly made bed, gave the bed one final check over.

"All set!" Stoic answered.

"Come on...Hiccup..." Spitelout said.

Opening his eyes, Hiccup looked to where his father stood next to his bed. Nodding to Spitelout Hiccup leaned forward, and attempted to stand.

"Woah!" Spitelout yelled.

"Easy Hiccup!"

Clasping his arms on Hiccup's shoulder's, Spitelout helped Hiccup stand up. Slowly, he and Hiccup made it towards the bed. Reaching their destination, Hiccup plunkered down heavily, and sighed loudly. His eyelids suddenly felt heavy as he could feel sleep begin to tug them downward.

"All right... It's time for you to-" Spitelout started.

Exhausted, Hiccup fell sideways and placed his head on his pillow. Slowly, he repositioned the rest of his body on the bed.

"Get some rest now..." Spitelout finished.

Leaning over, Stoic pulled the blanket up and brought it up to Hiccup's chin. Gently, he smoothed Hiccup's hair to the side. A sigh of relief escaped from Stoic's lips as he saw Hiccup was already fast asleep.

Spitelout knelt down and began to examine Hiccup's stub. His brow furrowed as he looked over the cut he'd made earlier. The darkening veins had actually begun to lessen, but they were still present.

"What is it Spite?" Stoic asked, his voice laced with concern.

"The infection's still there..." Spitelout answered.

"But he's beginning to heal...slowly..."

Stoic nodded slowly as the news began to sink into his mind. Hiccup was going to make it! He was going to be all right. Suddenly a tiny thought creep-ed into his mind amidst the good thoughts, pushing them out of the way. If Toothless never returned, Hiccup might never really recover. Stoic sighed out loud.

"What is it Stoic?" Spitelout asked, upon eying the sol-um look that befell Stoic's face.

"I'm afraid Spite.." Stoic uttered, his voice wavering as he made his way over towards the fire pit.

Spitelout watched as his brother stopped mid-step, and leaned on one of the many pillars in their home. He gasped as saw Stoic turned his back to his brother, and rested his head in the palm of his hand. All

though he'd never seen his brother show anything but the utmost strength and braver, Spitelout understood the sol-um outburst. If \_anything \_ever happened to Snotlout he \_knew \_he would be this upset, if not \_more. \_

Spitelout rose, and grabbed two near by benches and brought them over to where Stoic stopped. Setting them down, he then placed a hand on Stoic's shoulder. Stoic turned away at his brothers touch, not wanting his brother to see the tears that had made their way down his face already. Spitelout tightened his grasp as he spun Stoic around semi forcefully. Facing his brother, Stoic's gaze immediately fell to the floor as he chocked down the sobs silently.

"It's ok...Stoic.." Spitelout uttered, shaking his brother gently.

A single sob escaped Stoic's lips as he looked up and met Spitelout's gaze.

"I'm...\_afraid...\_What if...Toothless...Nuh..." Stoic uttered, halting mid-sentence.

Stoic's chin quivered, as thoughts of a bed ridden Hiccup flashed across his mind. He was \_almost sure \_that if Toothless never returned, Hiccup would never leave that bed. The difference in Hiccup's whole attitude and demeanor when the dragon was around was a complete opposite to what he now saw, as he eyed Hiccup's sleeping form.

"Toothless \_will return, \_and Hiccup \_will get better..." \_Spitelout stated, sensing his brothers thoughts.

"I hope...You're right brother..." Stoic replied, softly.

"For now...He \_must \_rest." Spitelout ordered.

Stoic nodded.

"I'm going to head back to my home, and rest." Spitelout stated.

"Think you'll be all right for a couple of hours?"

Stoic nodded again.

Spitelout shook his brother's shoulder reassuringly.

Stoic's head shot up, and looked Spitelout in the eye.

"It's gonna be \_all right \_Stoic..." Spitelout stated.

Stoic smiled weakly.

Turning, Spitelout made his way to the door and slipped out quickly.

Stoic side stepped, and plunkered down on the nearby bench his brother had brought over. Resting his hand on his knees, he buried his face in his hands. His shoulders shook as the tears returned with a renewed ferocity. Silently, he fought to choke down the sob that made it's way to his throat.

A soft whimper floated over from where Hiccup lay. Stoic's head shot up as he heard Hiccup's distress. Rising, he made his way to his son's side. Hiccup's face held a sol-um expression as his head moved too and fro. Stoic gasped as he realized Hiccup was having a horriblenightmare.

Hiccup stood on the upper most dock watching a single boat sail towards the island of Berk. He recognizer his father's boat immediately as he eyed the markings on the side of the boat. As his eyes continued to scan the boat, they stopped cold as they fell on a large black object. Hiccup fell to his knee's as he eyed the red tail fin that adorned the now still form of his beloved dragon. Hiccup burst into tears as he realized his father and found Toothless, and brought him back to him. Tears blurred his vision as he looked down, seeking out the gaze of his father. He saw Stoic scan the docks of Berk. He watched Stoic's gaze drifted upwards until he saw Hiccup. Hiccup watched as Stoic bowed his head, and shook it gently.

Hiccup's brow continued to furrow even deeper, as the nightmare took further hold of his mind. Gently Stoic leaned in and took Hiccup's shoulder's in hand, and shook him gently.

"Wake up Hiccup!" Stoic uttered, his voice breaking.

Hiccup whimpered again, as his whole body began to tremble.

"Toothlu-" Hiccup muttered, as his eyes flew open.

Hiccup looked around nervously, as he surveyed the room for his beloved dragon. His eyes then grew wide as he remembered that Toothless was gone.

Stoic sat down beside Hiccup and pulled him upright, and helped him lean back against the beds back board. Hiccups ran his hands through his hair as he began to feel an all familiar pressure return to his chest. Immediately he clasped his hands to his chest.

"Hiccup?" Stoic asked, his voice laced with worry.

"I...I \_can't breathe Dad!" \_Hiccup whimpered.

Stoic wrapped his arm around Hiccup and pulled him close. Stoic felt his throat burn with tears as he felt Hiccup \_nestle \_against him, much like he'd done when he was a young lad.

>"<em>Oh son..." <em>Stoic exclaimed, resting his head atop Hiccup's.

"You're gonna get better...n' Toothless..."

Stoic was cut off by Hiccup's shoulders shaking almost violently. Looking down, he could see Hiccup was sobbing silently, all the while straining to keep the deep reservoir of anguish at bay.

"Out with it..." Stoic uttered softly.

Hiccup ex-hailed forcefully. With in moments, his cries transformed into blatant wailing. Hiccup held nothing back as he bemoaned with

renewed ferocity.

"\_Toooooooooothlesssss..." \_Hiccup uttered, scant of breath.

Hiccup continued to sob loudly as he leaned forward and placed his head on his father's knee.

"It \_hurts...so much.." \_Hiccup stammered.

"I know...\_I know..." \_Stoic soothed

"I...I...should huh-" Hiccup blubbered, but was cut off by another wave of sorrow. His shoulder's shook even harder as he buried his head in his hands.

Stoic smoothed Hiccup's hair back as he fought to keep his own composure.

"There...\_there..." \_Stoic soothed

Steadily the shaking lessened, and the cries seemed to subside, as Hiccup began to calm down. Stoic rose and helped Hiccup scoot down and lay his head on the pillow.

"Try n' rest some..." Stoic encouraged.

Hiccup nodded in response.

Reaching forward Stoic pulled the blanket and tucked it tightly around his son. Turning he headed to the area under the stairs and gathered two logs in his arms. Small embers burst upward as he place the two logs down atop the pit. Grabbing the small iron rod he prodded the logs into place.

As Hiccup rolled to his right side, he closed his eyes tightly. Visions of Toothless danced before him causing his heart to ache. The tears began to fall with out warning, as Hiccup strained to keep his cries silent. He sniffed loudly, and rubbed his nose gingerly. Rolling over, Hiccup turned and lay on his stomach. He buried his head in his pillow and gave into the silent cries. He could feel his whole body began to tremble as the grief engulfed his tiny frame.

As more embers floated upward, Stoic \_thought \_he head something. He paused mid-poke and strained to hear the sound again. He was about to prod the logs again when he heard Hiccup sniffing. Turning he glanced over his shoulder, only to see Hiccup's small frame shuddering impetuously.

"...\_Hiccup..." \_Stoic uttered softly, as he rose.

Nearing Hiccup's bedside, Stoic was taken aback at how ardently Hiccup's body trembled. Gently, he lay his hand atop Hiccup's head. Stoic gasped as Hiccup's shoulders tensed at his touch.

Immediately, Hiccup lifted his head, and looked away. He tried to hide his tears by wiping them with his sleeves. But he \_could not\_ still his trembling lip. His whole body seemed to miss the message, when he willed himself to stop trembling.

"...\_Oh Hiccup..."\_ Stoic uttered.

Hiccup began to breathe loudly.

"I can't...I can't..even close...muh...eyes wif..out..." Hiccup stuttered.

"I..can't..."

Hiccup's whole face contorted for a moment, before Hiccup buried his face in his pillow. Stoic heard him in-hail forcefully, and feared Hiccup would smother himself.

"Hiccup!" Stoic yelled.

A muffled cry emanated forth from Hiccup, as his shoulder's continued to shake. Reaching forward, Stoic leaned in and scooped Hiccup into his arms. Stoic jarred back as he felt Hiccup's tiny frame continue to shudder ferociously. Making his way over to the pillar nearest the fire pit, he knelt down and rested against the sturdy pillar. Upon sitting down, Stoic looked down, and noticed Hiccup had gone eerily quiet. He heard Hiccup take in a shuddering breath.

"\_...Hiccup..?\_" Stoic asked, tenderly.

As Stoic's gaze fell upon Hiccup, he felt Hiccup's whole body trembling. It was as if Hiccup was literally\_ fighting \_against a force that threatened to over power him at any moment.

"\_Why am I such a useless weakling!" \_Hiccup thought to himself.

"\_I can't let...muh...dad...see muh...cry...I must be...strong..."

—

Stoic continued to study the look that befell upon Hiccup's face. Hiccup had his eyes closed tightly, and his mouth had formed into a straight line. Stoic became frantic as it looked as if Hiccup was holding his breath. Stoic breathed a sigh of relief as he saw Hiccup flair his nostrils slightly. Hiccup's chin began to quiver as his shoulder's began to shudder.

"HICCUP!" Stoic yelled loudly.

Hiccup's eyes shot open immediately. Quickly, they darted over an met Stoic's gaze. By the sound of his voice, Hiccup figured he had yet again angered his father. But as he met the gaze of his father, he saw no anger. Hiccup squinted as he studied the look that had befallen the face of his father. He gasped as he saw a sheen of tears form in Stoic's eyes. Hiccup thought he was seeing things, until he saw the first tear fall and make it's way down Stoic's cheek. As Hiccup watched his father brush the tear away, he felt the weight on his chest begin amplify. Panic set in as he saw his father's shoulder's began to shake slightly. He could feel his resolve dissolving as he saw Stoic bury his head in his free hand.

Stoic's grip tightened around Hiccup as his shoulder's began to shake might-ally. He knew he was supposed to be \_strong \_for his son, but seeing Hiccup attempt to put on such a bold, brave front only added to the guilt Stoic felt. Guilt for \_all the times\_ he had miss treated his son. As Stoic could see the obvious grief smothering Hiccup, the more Hiccup \_fought against it\_ the more Stoic realized



how \_much \_he had forced Hiccup to bury who he was.

\_"What kind of father forces their own son...Their own flesh n' blood to suppress what makes them who they truly are!" \_Stoic thought to himself.

"Dad?" Hiccup asked, hesitantly.

At the sound of Hiccup's small voice, a single sob escaped from Stoic's lips. Looking down, he saw that fear had edged it's way onto Hiccup's face. He watched Hiccup's eyes dart back and forth nervously. Stoic closed his eyes as another sob permeated forth.

"...\_What've I done..?" \_Hiccup muttered to himself.

Stoic opened his eyes and looked upon his son. Fear began to settle in as he saw Hiccup ran his hands through his hair nervously. Before his eyes, Hiccup began to sob silently. He felt Hiccup's shoulder's shake as the grief ensued.

"Oh...suh...\_son..." \_Stoic uttered, sniffing loudly.

"You've done...\_nothing..." \_

Hiccup's shoulder's shook even more, as he heard his father's words.

Stoic watched his son continue to stifle the sobs that tried so fervently to break free. Stoic pulled Hiccup close, and wrapped his arms around him. Stoic buried his head in Hiccup's hair as he spoke.

"You...don't have..to be so brave..\_all the time..." Stoic uttered.

Hiccup had grown so used to being forced to bury any and all feeling that it seemed too good to be true. Hiccup began to breathe loudly, as his father's words sunk in.

"It's ok...Hiccup..." Stoic said, his voice breaking.

"Let it out son..."

Stoic looked down, and saw Hiccup had his eyes shut tightly. He saw Hiccup shake his head in disbelief.

"...\_Hiccup?..." \_Stoic asked quietly.

Hiccup looked up and met his father's gaze.

"..\_It's ok son...You miss Toothless don't you?" \_Stoic inquired.

Hiccup's shoulders began to shudder, as he nodded fervently. He kept his gaze locked with Stoic's as he sought to make sure he'd heard his father correctly. He couldn't \_really \_tell if his father was actually ok with him showing this much weakness.

"\_Then...let...it...out!" \_Stoic said.

Hiccup's whole body seemed to writhe as Stoic spoke. Turning, Hiccup rested his head against his father's chest and took in a shuddering breath. He ex-hailed and let loose the heart wrenching sob that had quelled inside him.

Stoic gasped out loud, and held Hiccup tighter as Hiccup began to lament fervently. Stoic shuddered as he felt Hiccup began to tremble even \_more \_as the grief flooded forth.

Hiccup wailed loudly as visions of Toothless flying away angrily taunted him. He was so \_angry \_with himself for being \_so selfish \_and keeping Toothless grounded against his will. Stoic gasped as he heard Hiccup mumble something quietly.

"What's that?" Stoic asked, parting their embrace.

"Why...didn't...I build that \_stupid \_tale \_sooner\_" Hiccup blubbered.

"Hiccup...what's done...Is \_done\_" Stoic stated.

"It's...\_all...my fault..." \_Hiccup uttered quietly.

"Oh son..." Stoic soothed.

"I know...I know you miss him \_terribly\_..."

Hiccup moaned loudly as the truth in his father's words stung harshly.

"Oh Gods...I..It \_hurts\_...so much..." \_Hiccup bemoaned, clutching his hands to his heart.

Hiccup bawled loudly, as the pressure on his chest tightened. Stoic tightened his embrace and held his son as Hiccup continued to lament ferociously. Stoic just hoped that Toothless would return \_soon\_ so that Hiccup could \_finally \_see that he had made the right decision in giving his beloved dragon his free flight.

Hiccup continued to bawl loudly for a good long while, but Stoic did not loosen his grip the whole time. After an hour had passed, Stoic felt Hiccup relax. Looking down, he saw Hiccup take in a shuddering breath. Stoic felt a tear cascade down his cheek as he realized Hiccup had actually cried himself to sleep.

"Oh...\_son..." \_Stoic said under his breath.

Stoic had never in his life, dreamt that Hiccup would have \_that deep \_of a reservoir of feeling. But what pierced Stoic's heart even more was the fact that Hiccup had \_finally trusted him\_ and let his guard down. Hiccup had finally let Stoic see a glimpse of his true self.

Gently he hugged Hiccup tightly, as he rose to one knee. Gently, he sauntered towards Hiccup's bed. Kneeling, Stoic gently placed Hiccup down, placing Hiccup's head on his pillow. As he pulled his hand from underneath Hiccup's head, he saw a solitary cheek fall down Hiccup's

cheek. Stoic leaned forward and brushed it away gingerly.

"...nuh..." Hiccup mumbled sleepily.

Stoic tensed as he feared Hiccup would wake up.

"Shhhh... Rest Hiccup...\_Rest...\_"

As Stoic sat in the chair next to Hiccup's bedside, he marveled at how \_much\_ the two of them had learned about one another in the past three weeks. Hiccup had seen the father in Stoic that he'd always dreamt of. And Stoic saw Hiccup for who he \_truly\_ was. However, since Toothless still had \_not\_ returned, Hiccup's improvement had slowed drastically. His leg was indeed, much better then it had been on that Snoggletog night. But with out his beloved dragon at his side, Hiccup continued to slip into a depressive state. Stoic shuddered, as the even's of the last evening reappeared in his mind.

\_He had walked in with a pale of dinner in his hand, and found Hiccup collapsed near his bed. \_Stoic rested his hands in his head as he recounted the memory\_. \_

\_ Stoic bounded over to his son and scooped him into his arms.\_

\_ "Why didn't you wait for me!" Stoic yelled, his voice laced with panic. \_

\_ Looking down, it was evident from his damp tunic why Hiccup had tried to move with out his father's help. In a state of panic, Stoic put his hand to Hiccup's mouth. Stoic sighed in relief as Hiccup's short breaths puffed against his hand. \_

\_ That night he washed his son, and placed him in his bed. He looked to his son, somehow knowing that Hiccup would not wake this time. He just sat and prayed to Oden to send Toothless home, before it was too late.\_

A loud \_thud\_ jarred Stoic from his thoughts. There had been numerous thunder storms in the past three weeks. And all though being visited by various guests had helped bring a little hope to him that his son would be ok, the sound made Stoic think that death was knocking at the door.

"Oh Oden..Please \_don't\_ take my Hiccup from me..." Stoic uttered, his voice wavering.

As Stoic buried his head in his hands, another \_thud\_ permeated from the roof top. Suddenly a loud scraping noise presented itself. Stoic looked up suddenly, following the direction of the sound. He braced himself.

"Oh Gods..." Stoic said to himself.

The door to their home nudge open suddenly. A faint creek filled the room as a black head popped through the opening. A pair of emerald green eyes met Stoic's gaze. Toothless looked to Stoic, and then his gaze fell upon the small figure in the bed beside him. A sad purring noise emanated forth as Toothless took in the sight of his boy.

A sol-um look came over Toothless as he slowly made his way over towards Stoic. He winced as he expected a harsh reprimand from his boys father. However, Toothless almost bolted backwards as Stoic pulled Toothless into a tight embrace.

"Oh Toothless...You're \_here!" \_Stoic uttered, softly.

Toothless brayed sadly.

"I know...It's ok bud...But right now..You're \_here \_and we need to \_save him." \_Stoic replied, understanding the creatures guilt.

Toothless sauntered over to the opposite side of Hiccup's bed and sat on his haunches. Leaning in he put his face close to Hiccup's. He sniffed gingerly, before growling lightly. Leaning in further, he nudged Hiccup with his muzzle. Hiccup didn't budge. Toothless brayed sadly before laying his head down next to Hiccup's.

Stoic watched as Hiccup's hair seemed to move with every breath Toothless emitted. His eyes darted back and forth as he waited for Hiccup's eyes to open. Suddenly, he heard Toothless bray bemoaning-ly. It was slow, steady, and sorrowful.

With out warning, Hiccup's hand jerked upwards smacking Toothless. Toothless's ears perked to attention as the sudden burst of life came forth from Hiccup. Stoic leaned in, as he saw Hiccup's hand began to feel around blindly.

Hiccup steadily ran his hands up the side of Toothless's face and stopped at the top, resting between Toothless's ears. His eyes all though closed, began to move rapidly as his senses slowly returned. Hiccup's eyes fluttered open for a moment, and then closed.

"Oh son...\_please...\_Wake up!" Stoic yelled.

Hiccup's eyes bolted open. His glare froze as he stared at the ceiling.

Toothless cocked his head questioningly.

"Hiccup?" Stoic asked.

"Son, can you hear me?"

Hiccup blinked, slowly.

Stoic reached forward, and placed a hand on Hiccup's shoulder.

"Hiccup?" Stoic asked.

Hiccup turned towards his father, and met his gaze. He blinked several times as the haze finally wore off.

"Dad?" Hiccup asked, quietly.

"There is someone...here..to \_see you..\_" Stoic stated.

Hiccup furrowed his brow, not fully understanding Stoic's statement. Upon seeing Hiccup's confusion, Stoic looked up and met Toothless's gaze. Hiccup followed his father's gaze and turned his head to the other side of the bed. Toothless began to wiggle excitedly as he could barely contain the excitement. Hiccup was \_finally awake. \_

\_ "Toothl-?" \_Hiccup inquired.

He was cut off by a slobbery tongue being dragged across his face. As Toothless finished his \_formal greeting\_ Hiccup sat there as the shock began to press on his nerves. Wiping the slobber from his eyes, he buried his head in his hands. He began to breathe loudly as a nagging fear began to tug at his heart strings.

"Hiccup!" Stoic said, placing his hands on Hiccup's shoulder's.

"Son...what is it?"

"This is...\_just a dream...\_Isn't it?" Hiccup stammered.

"No...This is \_real \_Hiccup!" Stoic replied, shaking Hiccup's shoulder's lightly.

Hiccup began to sob silently. His shoulder's shook as he began to feel exhaustion sinking in.

"Dad! \_Oh...please...wake me up!" \_Hiccup yelled.

Stoic took Hiccup by the shoulders and lay him down. He pulled the covers up to Hiccup's chin, and tucked him in. Toothless leaned in and purred soothingly. Gently he lay his head near Hiccup's and closed his eyes. Hiccup shivered as he yawned causing his eyelids to \_slowly \_close.

Stoic turned and headed up the stair case. As he sat down on \_his \_bed it dawned on him how tired \_he really was\_. Laying down he breathed a silent prayer to Oden, thanking him for \_finally \_sending Toothless home.

"\_Please...Help Hiccup see that this \_really is Toothless!" Stoic prayed silently.

Stoic listened to the various creaks the house made as he began to drift to sleep. Before he knew it he fell into a deep \_deep \_sleep. He began to snore as the night wore on.

A sudden and \_loud\_ thud woke Stoic from his deep slumber. From below, he could hear Hiccup breathing loudly. Stoic sat up and bolted to the stair case. As he made his decent he saw Hiccup sprawled on the floor, with his hands clenched to his chest. The color was draining from his face at an alarming rate.

"\_Oh Gods..Oh GODS..." \_Hiccup sputtered, burying his face in his hands.

"Hiccup!" Stoic yelled, bounding off the last step.

Stoic quickly made his way towards his son, and knelt down beside him. Toothless clambered around the bed and sat \_behind \_Stoic. Stoic

stole a glance over his shoulder, and saw Toothless \_cowering\_ behind him. Reaching forward, Stoic wrapped his arm around Hiccup.

"What \_is it\_ son?" Stoic asked, tenderly.

"I...I'm...\_loosing..my mind..." \_Hiccup stammered.

"I can't \_take this\_ anymore!"

Hiccup moaned frustratedly, as he ran his hands through his hair, before staring at the floor.

Stoic clasped \_both hands \_around Hiccup's shoulder's and shook him frantically.

"HICCUP!" Stoic bellowed loudly.

Stoic shook him again.

Hiccup snapped his head upward, and met his father's gaze.

"Hiccup...\_All this...\_is \_real\_" Stoic yelled.

"...\_Really...?"\_ Hiccup answered, quietly.

"I...I..I can't...tell anymore..."

"Oh son!" Stoic stammered, pulling Hiccup into a hug.

Hiccup turned, and leaned his head against his father's chest. Stoic gasped as he felt Hiccup's shoulder's tremble ardently. He tightened his embrace as he felt Hiccup's silent cries permeated forth.

"Hiccup?" Stoic whispered.

Hiccup uttered a single sob in reply.

\_"Hiccup..?"\_ Stoic inquired, softly.

"\_Whah?"\_ Hiccup stuttered, looking up to his father.

Stoic parted their embrace, and lifted his arm allowing Toothless to peer underneath. Hiccup stared at the pair of luminescent eyes that looked at him. As he and Toothless locked their gazes, Hiccup suddenly felt light headed.

"\_Oh...Gods..." \_Hiccup stated, his voice shaking.

He fell sideways, and leaned against his father as he continued to stare into the eyes of the creature before him. Hiccup \_could not\_ figure out \_why\_ he felt so light headed. Toothless brayed sadly, and gave a playful growl. Upon seeing the playful gesture Hiccup gasped out loud.

"...\_The..weight...on my chest...is...gone..." \_Hiccup thought to himself.

"..\_It's guh-?"\_

\_ "\_\_\*\*TOOTHLESS\*\*\_!" Hiccup bellowed, excitedly.

Hiccup fell forward, and clasped his arms around Toothless's leg. Toothless brayed sadly, as he felt Hiccup tremble. He has never seen Hiccup \_this \_unstable before. Gently he brought his paw up and placed it atop Hiccup's shoulder. He scooted Hiccup closer and bowed his head, piratically hiding Hiccup's entire body.

A hearty sob escaped Hiccup's lips as he held tightly to his beloved dragon. He had almost forgotten what it was like to feel the warmth cascading off of Toothless. Fear still nagged at the corners of his mind, as Hiccup spoke.

"..I'm...\_so sorry...Tuth-" \_

Hiccup burst into tears. He could \_not \_quell the growing guilt that still plagued him. He tightened his grasp as he began to wail loudly. He brushed the hot tears from his cheek with his sleeve, as felt Toothless shift. Hiccup pulled away, and looked up. Toothless looked down upon his boy, and wondered at the strange markings that now drenched Hiccup's face. Toothless cocked his head to the side as he watched more tears fall. Leaning in, he brought his muzzle close to Hiccup's face. He sniffed gingerly, before licking the wetness from underneath Hiccup's eyes.

"Eew...Eh...\_Toothless\_!" Hiccup scolded lightly, wiping the slobber from his face.

Looking up, Hiccup saw Toothless make a puzzled face.

"They're called, tears..." Hiccup explained.

"Humans...cry...when there \_happy..." Stoic interjected.

Hiccup's gaze shot over to where his father now stood.

"...And...\_suh...sad..." \_Hiccup stuttered, in reply.

He watched Stoic wipe the sadness from his eyes. Stoic looked to Hiccup, and nodded. Turning his gaze back to Toothless, Hiccup spoke with a shaking voice.

"Toothless...\_I'm so sorry bud..." \_

Toothless brayed sadly.

"I should've given you your tail...\_sooner..." \_

Toothless gave Hiccup a playful shove, knocking him flat on his back. As Hiccup lay sprawled out on his back, Toothless rose and stood \_over \_him. Gingerly, Toothless leaned in and grabbed Hiccup by the shoulder. Hiccup flinched as he felt Toothless's gummy mouth clasp his shoulder and hoist him up. As Hiccup sat up, Toothless simply placed his head against Hiccup's chest, purring contentedly. He \_knew \_what guilt was, and he could see it was suffocating the boy he loved so dearly. He continued to purr until he felt Hiccup's tiny hands wrap around his muzzle. His ears stood at attention as he heard Hiccup in-hail sharply. He purred louder. He quieted the moment he

felt Hiccup lay his head against his muzzle. Steadily, he could feel Hiccup relaxing.

Suddenly, Toothless rose and sauntered over to the far side of the fire pit, and lay down. Unfurling his wing, he gestured \_at \_Hiccup to lay next to him. Hiccup nodded, and rose to his hands and Knee's.

"Easy son.." Stoic said.

Clasping Hiccup's hand in his, Stoic helped Hiccup stand. Reaching down, Stoic sought to carry Hiccup.

"No dad.." Hiccup said.

Stoic then placed his hands on Hiccup's shoulder's and supported Hiccup as he hobbled over to Toothless. Hiccup grunted as he sank to his knee, wincing slightly as he hit his stub. Quickly, he clambered next to Toothless and nestled against the crook of Toothless's shoulder. Almost silently, Toothless folded his wing down, draping it over his side. Hiccup was completely hidden.

Stoic took in the sight of the duo, and nodded to Toothless. Leaning in he placed his hand atop Toothless.

"Where \_would I be with out you\_ Toothless?" Stoic asked quietly.

Toothless brayed sadly.

Stoic reached over and scratched Toothless under the chin, before heading back up to the loft. He knew he would \_finally \_get some \_real \_sleep now with Toothless guarding his son. As he reached the first step, he paused. Turning back to Toothless, he spoke.

"Thank you..."

Toothless nodded, and then motioned upwards to the loft. Stoic rolled his eyes jokingly, and smiled. He shook his head as he obeyed the dragons silent orders, and made his way to his bed. Sleep found Stoic the moment he rested his head atop his pillow.

"\_Stoic\_!"

Stoic felt a brusque set of hands shaking him by the shoulder's. He fought to open his eyes as the set of hands shook him again.

"\_Stoic\_!"

Stoic's eyes shot open, and met the gaze of his dear friend Gober. Looking around, Stoic found he was at a loss as to why he'd been awakened so rudely.

"You'd better get out there...\_before\_ he get's himself killed!" Gober yelled.

"What!" Stoic answered angrily.

Suddenly it dawned on him that Gober was talking about Hiccup. He



bolted upright and sprang towards the stair case. He eyed the empty living room as he made his way down, towards the front door.

"Where...\_is he\_?" Stoic asked over his shoulder.

"He's..."

Gober began to hobble down the first few steps tentatively, before continuing.

"Outside...\_"

\_ "Outside!" \_Stoic replied, frantically.

Stoic turned, and met Gober as he reached the bottom step. He placed his hand out and stopped Gober in his tracks.

"...\_Outside...\_doing...\_what?" \_Stoic asked, suspiciously.

"...Flying..." Gober responded, sighing heavily.

"WHAT!" Stoic bellowed.

Turning, Stoic grabbed the handle of the door and yanked it open might-ally. A \_brisk \_northern wind greeted him as he made his way outside. From the looks of things, the villagers were busy finishing up the last few repairs on the houses that had burned up in the chaos of the pre-snoggetog holiday catastrophe. He wondered around the corner to the side of the house and stared up to the sky.

As Stoic squinted to get a better look, he noticed Gober stood beside him. Looking over, he saw Gober was looking straight\_ up\_. He followed Gober's gaze and looked straight up into the now clear sky. Worry began to set in as he felt the wind began to blow harder with every passing second.

"So...\_where is he\_" Stoic asked impatiently.

"There!" Gober said, pointing.

Stoic strained his eyes as he followed the direction of Gober's pointed finger. Suddenly a black blur bustled by. Toothless looked incredibly tiny at the height he was at, and Stoic could only imagine how \_much more\_ the wind must be blowing against the flying duo.

With out warning Stoic saw Toothless turn, and dive towards the land. Stoic then felt his stomach drop to his feet as the black blur suddenly became \_two \_blurs. Stoic gasped as Hiccup fell from Toothless saddle, and hurled towards the ground.

"\_HICCUP!" \_Stoic yelled, scant of breath.

"Oh Gods...What's he thinkin'?"

As Stoic and Gober continued to watch the two free falling, Stoic saw something. He watched as Toothless reach out towards

Hiccup.

"\_Please...save 'em!" \_Stoic thought aloud.

Stoic saw Toothless nudge Hiccup's shoulder playfully, causing him to spiral slowly. It was obvious that the two were not slowing down at all, and had no intentions of reuniting in flight any time soon.

"Oh Gods...I...can't watch!" Stoic said averting his gaze.

"Stoic!" Gober yelled, grabbing Stoic by the shoulder's

Gober yanked Stoic around, just in time to see Toothless dart towards the right, catching Hiccup safely in the saddle.

Toothless spread his wings as he prepared to slow to a drift. He could see the boy's father had a very worried look on his face.

"Oh...come on bud!" Hiccup yelled in protest.

"One more go...\_please..."\_

Toothless shook his head. It was obvious to the dragon that the boy did not \_see\_ that his father was frantically beside himself with worry.

"\_Toothless...Come..on..." \_Hiccup protested.

Toothless touched down and halted the flight abruptly, causing Hiccup to tumble forward onto the ground. His gaze fell immediately on the boy as he heard Hiccup yelp upon impact.

"Ow...\_that..hurt..." \_Hiccup sputtered, claspng his stub with his left hand.

"Hiccup!" Stoic bellowed, making his way over.

"Are you \_hurt!\_"

Hiccup's head snapped upward as he heard the sound of his father's voice. He braced himself as he heard the tone of anger seeping from the words his father spoke.

"Dad!...Oh..\_you're up..\_ah..." Hiccup stammered, nervously.

"What in Oden's name were ya thinkin'?" Stoic yelled.

"Your legs not healed enough to ride!"

"Dad...I've been...\_grounded \_for a solid month..." Hiccup answered, his voice shaking.

"Do...you..nuh..."

Hiccup stopped mid-sentence. His gaze fell to the ground. Gathering strength he pushed back onto his haunches. He continued to stare at the ground as he felt a wave of tears start to burn his throat. He just \_couldn't \_quell his quivering chin.

Stoic walked over and knelt beside Hiccup. He placed his hand on Hiccup's shoulder.

"I'm sorry...I didn't mean to yell..." Stoic apologized.

"I've...waited for \_this\_, for...\_so long..." \_Hiccup rasped, as his shoulder's began to shake. A sudden gust of wind pushed Hiccup forward onto his hands and knee's.

"Easy!" Stoic yelled.

Clasping his hands around Hiccup's shoulder's, he stood and helped Hiccup stand up. Hiccup's leg began to wobble as the wind continued to blow fiercely against him. Hiccup was trembling so vehemently, that Stoic couldn't tell if Hiccup was crying or just plain cold.

"Come on, let's get you two inside." Stoic ordered.

Hiccup leaned against his father, as they made there way back to the house. Toothless followed the two, and Gober then followed the trio into the house.

Upon entering, Gober saw Stoic and Hiccup make their way over to the bed, as Toothless lay on the side opposite Stoic. Toothless scooted close to Hiccup so that the heat from his body would emanate towards Hiccup. Gober hobbled over to the pile of logs, and grabbed two. He threw them on the embers, and began to poke at the fire pit with the metal fire prod.

Hiccup's chattering teeth had began to fill the room noisily as sat down on the bed. Stoic knelt down, and draped a blanket around Hiccup and held it in place. He then put his arms around Hiccup and held him close. He tightened his grip as he felt Hiccup continue to shiver violently.

"How's that fire comin' along?" Stoic asked, turning toward Gober.

Toothless rose, and wondered over to the fire pit. Stoic saw Toothless open his mouth and in-hail gathering gas in his mouth.

"He's gonna light-" Stoic started.

The fire ball Toothless shot out, cut Stoic's words short. The fire pit \_burst \_to life as blue flames shot upward. Gober jumped back as the heat radiated forth with the utmost intensity.

"Beard of \_Thor!" \_Gober yelled loudly.

"Well...That settles \_that\_!..Well I think I'll..uh..head..out.."

It was clear to Gober that neither father, nor son, nor dragon was paying attention to him, so he exited quietly. Toothless turned and wondered over to his place by Hiccup.

Stoic helped Hiccup lay down. He saw Hiccup turn towards Toothless.

"You'll be here when I wake up...right?" Hiccup asked.

Toothless leaned in, and nudged Hiccup affectionately. He barked as he nodded his head abruptly. Stoic sighed loudly as he knew Hiccup would be all right now that his beloved dragon was back. As Stoic watched Hiccup reach out and stroke Toothless gingerly, Hiccup suddenly turned and faced him.

"Dad?" Hiccup asked, quietly.

Stoic gasped as he saw a fresh sheen of tears form in Hiccup's eyes. Gently, he reached forward and brushed Hiccup's hair to the side.

"What is it son?"

As Hiccup closed his eyes, he felt the tears began to fall.

>"Hiccup...<em>out with it..." <em>Stoic ordered.

"\_...Wuh..." \_Hiccup stammered.

Suddenly, Hiccup sat up and grasped his arms around his father. He arms began to shake as he held \_tightly \_to his father. Stoic gasped as he felt Hiccup's arms began to tremble.

"\_Oh...son...\_It's ok..." Stoic soothed.

Hiccup burst into tears.

>"Where?" Stoic prompted softly.<p>

"...\_Wuh...wuh..." \_

The sobbing continued. Hiccup's shoulder's shook ferociously as the grief seemed to overpower him. No matter how hard he tried he couldn't get the words out of his mouth. He began to breathe hard as panic set in. He clung to his father tightly, fearing he would wake up to find the house completely empty.

"...\_Oh Hiccup..." Stoic soothed, as he felt Hiccup tighten his grip.

Hiccup fell into the crook of his father's arm and wept ardently. He mumbled something between the sobbing, but it was too muffled for Stoic to make it out. Parting their embrace, Stoic held Hiccup up by the shoulder's. Hiccup looked away, refusing eye contact, as tears continued to spill over.

"Hiccup, look at me son..." Stoic ordered, loudly.

Hiccup jumped at the sound of his father's voice. Immediately he looked to his father.

"What's on your mind son?" Stoic asked.

Hiccup lip quivered, as he sought to form his words.

"Wuh..."

Hiccup paused, gulping out loud.

"Will...\_you...be here...?" Hiccup uttered, his voice breaking.

Stoic pulled Hiccup into a hug. He held him tightly, as his words sunk in. Hiccup was showing that he \_did care\_ for his father.

"...Oh...\_my son...\_" Stoic stammered, as his voice began to waver.

As Stoic held Hiccup, a revelation came to mind. He was \_finally\_ able to show Hiccup how much he \_loved him\_ for \_who he was\_. He was finally able to be the father he wanted to be. As he heard Hiccup sigh contently, he realized that Hiccup had \_finally\_ \_felt\_ comfortable enough to share \_true thoughts and feelings\_ \_with him. He felt his chest swell with pride as he realized that both he and his son had made progress in mending their relationship.

"Of \_course\_ \_I'll be here" Stoic answered, tenderly.

"Hiccup?"

Upon hearing the question, Hiccup looked up and met his father's gaze.

"Yeah...Dad?" Hiccup answered.

"I...\_I love you son..\_" \_Stoic answered, sniffing loudly.

Hiccup fell forward, and wrapped his arms around his father's chest. He clung as tightly as he could, as he spoke the phrase he'd been longing to say.

"I love you too, Dad"

End  
file.